

COMMISSION ORGANIZATION

The eleven members of the Commission are appointed by the Mayor and serve without compensation. Under Chapter 207 of the City of Louisville Codified General Ordinances, as amended, the Commission consists of the Director of the Department of Housing, the Executive Director of the Planning Commission, a member of the Board of Aldermen, plus an architect, a licensed real estate broker, a historian, an attorney, and four at-large members, all of whom must have a known interest in historic preservation. The duties of the Commission include designating local landmarks and preservation districts. Local designation occurs only after extensive historical and architectural documentation, using criteria identical to those required for listing of the property on the National Register of Historic Places, and a public hearing where property owners and neighborhood residents may endorse or oppose the designation.

Another principal duty of the Commission is to review the design of exterior changes to locally designated structures. This is accomplished through



an application and public hearing process which takes from four to six weeks. Many exterior changes have been preapproved by the Commission and are described in the following Guidelines section. The Commission is assisted in the review process by its Architectural Review Committees and its staff.

The Architectural Review Committee (ARC) meets with property owners to discuss proposed work and makes a recommendation to the Commission on that work's appropriateness. The committees, one for each district, are composed of the City's Chief Building Inspector, architects, design professionals, and neighborhood residents, who serve as volunteer appointees of the Commission. The staff, which consists of architectural designers, historians, and administrative personnel, assists the Commission and ARCs by working with property owners, compiling information, and administering the ordinance. The staff also provides property owners with free design assistance, information on tax incentives for rehabilitation, and historical documentation.

SUMMARY OF REVIEW PROCESS

Applications for exterior changes not preapproved under the Guidelines are first reviewed through an informal public hearing by the ARC held on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month. On the following Wednesday (first and third Wednesdays of the month), the Commission acts upon the application, taking into account the recommendation of the ARC. Applications must be received by the office in time to allow for the required fifteen-day legal notice period.

For review, the owner must provide sufficient graphic information to fully explain the proposed work — drawings, sketches, photographs, etc. In reviewing all applications, the Commission will utilize the standard measures of design, including scale, texture, rhythm, massing, material, color, pattern, and relationship of solid to void, in the context of the district. The owner or his representative should plan to attend the ARC and Commission meetings to discuss the proposed work.

The members of the ARC may vote to recommend approval or denial, or postpone action on the application for one meeting. The Commission has the same voting options. A Commission vote of approval results in the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness, which is the official document recording the proposed work. A vote of denial institutes a six-month waiting period during which the staff attempts to negotiate a compromise solution with the owner. The Commission will reconsider a denied application for approval at any regular meeting during the six-month period if a compromise is reached. If no compromise is reached, certain types of exterior work may be permanently denied provided criteria in the ordinance are met. (See Ordinance Section 8e, paragraph 2.)

The applicant may suspend or reinstate an appli-

cation by written request at any time during the process outlined above. There is no time limitation for performing work which has been approved.

In an effort to speed up the review process, the Commission has increased the scope of work which may be approved by the staff. A letter from the staff approving work to be done in accordance with the Commission's approved Guidelines may be issued in a matter of hours. Staff may approve proposed work which restores an existing condition to the original design, if the original design can be documented. No approval is required for restoration, repair, or maintenance of an existing exterior building element. The owner is strongly encouraged to consult with staff prior to beginning work, to insure that the work will enhance and improve the quality of detail on the structure.

The Department of Building Inspection will not issue a building or demolition permit affecting a designated property without a Certificate of Appropriateness or a staff approval.

Commission authorization is not needed for the purpose of remedying emergency conditions officially determined by the Department of Building Inspection, the Division of Fire, the Board of Health, the City Forester, or any court.

Design and technical assistance, as well as tax and historical information, are available at the Landmarks Commission office. If you desire further explanation or clarification, please call 587-3501.